

THE NATION

FOREIGN RELATIONS

The Constant Policy

Basic U.S. policy in the Dominican Republic is simple. It is to prevent a Castro-style takeover in the Caribbean. Its ultimate aim is to set up a representative, constitutional government excluding extremists, from Trujilloists on the right to Reds on the left.

But carrying out that policy is nightmarishly difficult. U.S. policymakers have been forced to improvise from hour to hour. What looked like a stroke of intuitive genius one day seemed to be a blunder of impulsive foolishness the next. Nobody has found this more frustrating than the President of the U.S. Said Lyndon Johnson in a four-hour, after-dinner talkfest with some 30 journalists in the Georgetown home of Columnist Max Freedman: "We think we've got something patched up there and then it falls apart."

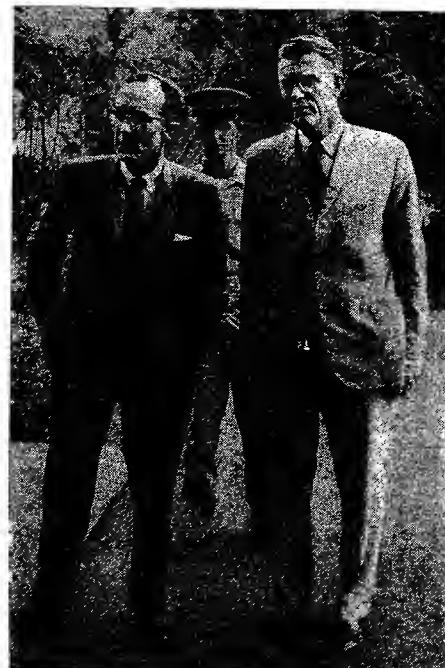
Quicksand. In tactical terms, patchwork is about the only plausible pursuit for the U.S. in the Dominican Republic. So corrosive is the hatred between the opposing Dominican forces that there is no middle ground. Yet the military middle ground is what 20,500 U.S. paratroopers and marines now hold, getting shot at from both sides, and the political middle ground is what the U.S. seeks, while suffering polemic potshots from around the world.

Most of the middle ground has proved to be quicksand. The rebels will not even talk to U.S. Ambassador W. Tapley Bennett Jr. if only because he was the first to cry Communist about their hard-core cadres. With Bennett cut off, President Johnson sent to the scene former Ambassador John Bartlow Martin, a friend of deposed Dominican President Juan Bosch, whose "constitutionalist" symbol the rebels were carrying. But the junta headed by Brigadier General Antonio Imbert Barreras remembered Martin as a promoter of Bosch and cut him cold. At that point, the U.S. had one pipeline to the junta (Bennett) and one to the rebels (Martin). Trouble was, Bennett and Martin disagreed, and it soon became evident that there was no pipeline between the pipelines.

At the same time, the Organization of American States became anathema to the rebels when an OAS committee reported that their ranks were infiltrated with Reds. And while the junta wel-



IN SANTO DOMINGO: BUNDY



MANN & BENNETT

From intuitive genius to impulsive blunder and back again.

comed the OAS, the rebels rolled out their Red carpet for the United Nations, which, with U.S. acquiescence, sent special envoys to Santo Domingo. This was the first time that the U.N. had directly intervened in hemispheric affairs, and it established a precedent that vastly disturbed the OAS.

The Mission. This was confusion compounded. In hope of clearing it up, President Johnson sent four trusted advisers south—White House Adviser McGeorge Bundy, Under Secretary of State Thomas C. Mann, Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs Jack Hood Vaughn, and Deputy Secretary of Defense Cyrus R. Vance. The mission, as a White House aide put it, was intended to "accelerate strategy." Officially neutral, the U.S. at first had seemed to lean to Imbert's junta. With the arrival of the Bundy mission, the U.S. started working toward a coalition headed by a onetime Bosch Cabinet member whose main qualification was that he had said he was anti-Communist (see THE HEMISPHERE).

To Imbert, this looked as if U.S. strategy were accelerating in reverse and he launched strong Dominican-manned military strikes against the rebels. At week's end a temporary truce

was in effect. The U.N. wanted to turn it into a permanent cease-fire, but the junta was reluctant to halt its offensive.

All other things being equal, the U.S. does not want any military man in the Dominican Republic's seat of power. But at week's end it appeared that Johnson might have to side with Imbert or someone approved by the general. Although this would not be an ideal solution, it would be in line with the basic U.S. policy that has remained constant throughout: no more Castros in the Caribbean.

The Lull That Lapsed

"From now on," said a U.S. official in Saigon, "they're going to have a tough time guessing how, when and where they may be hit. Some days they may not be hit at all. Other days they may get hit a little, and other days they may get plastered almost from border to border." In that spirit the U.S. last week ended a five-day lull in bombing raids against North Viet Nam.

Running Out of Bridges. In the days after the lull lapsed, U.S. planes, almost without letup, prowled north of the 17th parallel. Carrier-based Skyraiders and Skyhawks plastered petroleum-storage facilities at Phuqui, 125

miles south of Hanoi, sending braided columns of orange flame and black smoke billowing hundreds of feet into the air. Navy jets took potluck, strafing targets along highways, rail lines and riverbeds from the 17th parallel to a point only 80 miles from Hanoi. Air Force Thunderchiefs made the deepest penetration yet by U.S. warplanes, streaking up to the Red River Delta town of Ninhbinh, 60 miles south of Hanoi, to drop 500,000 propaganda leaflets urging North Viet Nam's people not to let "the Chinese and Vietnamese Communists use your bones and blood to wage a fratricidal war." Later in the week 90 Air Force jets returned with bombs instead of leaflets, blasted a big barracks near Ninhbinh.

Several factors had gone into Presi-

the U.S. to double its bomb loads if and when the raids resumed. North Viet Nam brusquely condemned the lull as a "U.S. swindle" and "a deceitful maneuver designed to pave the way for new U.S. acts of war."

In responding as it did, Hanoi proved Lyndon's point. And so, after five days, the Administration announced that it was "disappointed" because "we have seen no reaction" from the Reds, ordered the bombers into the air again.

The War Within

In a recent question-and-answer session at the University of Pittsburgh, Vice President Hubert Humphrey was asked about "ghastly, barbarous American attacks in Viet Nam." Humphrey exploded: "I'm glad you asked about



BEHEADED VICTIM OF THE VIET CONG

"The most unbelievable acts of terrorism the world has ever known!"

dent Johnson's earlier decision to order the pause. The U.S. had already blasted just about every worthwhile military target south of the populous Hanoi-Haiphong complex, and was running out of bridges and barracks to bomb. The lull gave U.S. reconnaissance planes a chance to assess the damage and size up new targets—and according to Communist broadcasts, the recon planes were busy indeed, some of them probing points only twelve miles from Hanoi. Perhaps most important, the lull gave Johnson a chance to show such critics as Canada's Prime Minister Lester Pearson and Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman J. William Fulbright that they were all wet in arguing that a halt in the bombing might open the way to negotiations.

Proving the Point. The President took special pains to inform Hanoi of the purpose of the lull. U.S. Ambassador to the Soviet Union Foy Kohler told Red China's Moscow embassy about it. U.S. officials let Russian diplomats in Washington know. The French, British and Canadians—all of whom have pipelines to Hanoi—were informed. Each was asked to pass on the message that any hostile action by the Viet Cong during the lull would prompt

that! I'm really going to tear into you! Only the Viet Cong has committed atrocities in Viet Nam! The Viet Cong has committed the most unbelievable acts of terrorism the world has ever known!"

Humphrey was, of course, overstating the case. War is war, and in Southeast Asia the South Vietnamese and probably some Americans have committed acts that would not be approved under the Geneva Conventions. But the fact remains that terrorism and atrocity against South Vietnamese civilians are the Viet Cong's chief weapons. As the U.S. gets more deeply involved, those weapons are being used in increasingly systematic intensity.

Who Is Next? In 1960, according to Pentagon count, Communist terrorists assassinated or kidnaped more than 3,000 South Vietnamese. Death came by knife, by pistol shot in the night, by bombs, by beatings, by tortures. Last year the Viet Cong assassinated or kidnaped 1,536 village chiefs or other government officials, murdered 1,359 other civilians and kidnaped still another 8,400. So far this year, the Viet Cong score is: 264 provincial officials killed and 364 kidnaped, 610 civilians killed and 3,026 kidnaped. An average of four

village chiefs or other local officials are murdered or kidnaped each day.

Villagers can only assume that they will be the next victims. This month for example, a Viet Cong platoon entered Phu Long hamlet in Binh Thuan province, killed an old man and raped two women. A Catholic priest and four civilians were kidnaped from a church, and all civilians were forced to leave the area. In Thua Thien province, the Viet Cong stopped some buses, abducted a nurse and two girls. In Pleiku province they fired on a bus, killed the driver and wounded ten passengers.

Earlier this year, the Viet Cong swept into Hoa Hoi hamlet in Binh Dinh province, burned 185 civilian homes, destroyed the inhabitants' personal belongings. In Long An, Viet Cong mines blew up three buses, killing eleven civilians. In Pleiku province, a Viet Cong company took over a hamlet and murdered ten members of the council.

The Chief's Children. Beyond the outright murders and kidnapings is the evidence of acts even more grisly. Two years ago, a government force came upon 35 weeping women and children—and the bodies of 30 Vietnamese militiamen, throats cut, bodies disemboweled, and in many cases, emasculated. In Binh Dinh province, the Viet Cong beheaded a village chief and hacked off the arm of the chief's twelve-year-old daughter. They also took the chief's six-year-old son, laid a rifle across his bare back and fired it several times, leaving a twelve-inch scar. In the same province two months ago, the Viet Cong conscripted 125 village men for forced labor; when 25 villagers refused to go along, the Viet Cong shot them. At a village between Saigon and Dalat last week, a Viet Cong soldier lectured peasants. "Tell your daughters," he said, "that we will skin alive any girl we find with an American. And if any American touches our girls, we will sterilize him."

As for evidence that American soldiers are not immune from such treatment, there is the recent incident in which government troops found the bodies of three U.S. soldiers who had been ambushed by the Viet Cong. The G.I.s had been disemboweled and emasculated; the parts were stuffed down their throats.

THE PRESIDENCY

Something of Value

Firm Asian supporters of U.S. Asian policy don't grow in every bamboo grove. So it was not surprising that Lyndon Johnson, just a month after postponing the state visits to the U.S. of Critics Ayub Khan of Pakistan and Lal Bahadur Shastri of India, spared no pains last week in welcoming South Korea's President Chung Hee Park, 48. After all, Park has demonstrated his loyalty by sending 2,000 army engineers and a medical team to help out in South Viet Nam.

Ruffles and flourishes started the visit